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SUBJECT: FM MORATINOS ON AFGHANISTAN

REF: MADRID 208

Classified By: Amb. Eduardo Aguirre for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos called Ambassador Aguirre February 7 to discuss Spain's commitment to Afghanistan in advance of the February 8-9 NATO ministerial in Sevilla. The Ambassador had previously spoken with Defense Minister Alonso and National Security Advisor Casajuana on the same subject (reftel), and Moratinos was returning the Ambassador's call.

¶2. (C/NF) The Ambassador told Moratinos that both he and Washington were disappointed by President Zapatero's decision not to increase Spain's troop commitment in Afghanistan. He noted that it was the Department's understanding after Moratinos and Secretary Rice met in Paris January 25 that Spain would be willing to be a more active partner in Afghanistan. The Ambassador also told Moratinos that the GOS should not interpret the Embassy's current silence in the media as in any way diminishing our disappointment with the decision.

¶3. (C/NF) Moratinos replied that he believed there must have been a misunderstanding from the Paris meeting, saying that he intended simply to underscore Spain's commitment to NATO, ISAF and the mission in Afghanistan. He had not meant to suggest that the U.S. could count on a Spanish expansion of its forces.

¶4. (C/NF) Turning to the Ambassador's initial comments, Moratinos said that the United States at times seemed to highlight the negative aspects of the bilateral relationship as it saw fit and often failed to focus on the positive. He outlined Spain's robust development assistance and military commitments to Afghanistan, including infrastructure and training programs. He argued that Spain is one of the lead contributors in Afghanistan, and he said that such commitments should underscore President Zapatero's commitment both to NATO and to ISAF. Moratinos suggested that no one is giving Spain credit for what it has done thus far.

¶5. (C/NF) After clarifying that he was only offering his personal opinion without instructions, Moratinos speculated that the situation might have been different had Secretary Rice been able to visit in the fall of 2006 as initially planned, as she could have pressed President Zapatero on the importance of the mission. He expressed chagrin at the fact that the Secretary had not visited Spain and suggested that the U.S. only treated Spain as a first world NATO ally when convenient. The Ambassador replied that the Secretary maintains an unquestionably professional schedule and reiterated that the postponement of the fall 2006 visit was unavoidable. He did not mention the possibility of a March

visit, but he reiterated USG disappointment with Spain's decision.

¶6. (C/NF) COMMENT: Moratinos, who waited several hours to return the Ambassador's call, had clearly prepared and scripted his message. Noticeably agitated, he took to the offensive, whereas Alonso made clear his unhappiness with Zapatero's decision and Casajuana expressed greater understanding and sympathy with our position. END COMMENT.

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